(c) A number of steps have been taken to increase our exports. These, *inter alia,* include:

▷Rationalisation of DEPB rates

▷Setting up of the Steel Exporters' Forum to remove bottlenecks in the steel exports.

▷Exploring/consolidating new/non--traditional markets.

▷Maximising exports to neighbouring countries.

▷Attempting to increase range of export products-wider range of products/sizes/grades.

▷Cosntesting trade cases for re-opening major traditional markets for our steel exports.

MoU between Management and the Workers' Union of BALCO

*8. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of DISINVESTMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Management and the Workers' Union of the Bharat Aluminium Corporation for calling off their over two months long strike;

(b) if so, the terms of the agreement; and

(c) the steps since taken and being taken in pursuance thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The salient points of the Memorandum of Understanding are as follows:—

(i) Withdrawal of disciplinary action against employees agitating in connection with disinvestment in BALCO.

(ii) Advance payment of amount equal to two months "take home" salary to the employees, which will be considered for adjustment on receipt of subsequent orders from Supreme Court in this matter.

(iii) The present service conditions will remain as they are till the service period of the workers. The workers will not be retrenched.

(iv) The welfare facilities like medical, LTC, canteen, conveyance allowance would be continued as before.

(v) The present voluntary retirement scheme will continue as it is.

(vi) The retirement age of employees will remain as 60 years.

(c) The Memorandum of Understanding is being implemented by the company.

Losses Suffered by SAIL

*9. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state: -

(a) whether it is a fact that after a loss of Rs. 1,700 crore in 1999-2000, SAIL has cut its losses to Rs. 700 crore in 2000-2001;

(b) whether this loss is despite the fact that the production of steel increased by 11 per cent to 29.70 million tonnes in 2000-2001; and

(c) if so, the reasons for this sustained loss?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has cut down its losses to Rs. 7.29 crore (Prov.) in 2000-01 against the loss of Rs. 1720 crores in 1999-2000.

(b) and (c) The production of saleable steel of SAIL was 9.703 million tonnes in 2000-01 which is about 2% higher over previous year.

The reasons for SAIL's continuing losses are—

*Stagnation in steel consumption consequent to general slow down in the economy;

*Low sales realization resulting from excess in the market;

*Sluggish exports due to anti-dumping action abroad;